

SATURDAY, NOV. 25, 1871.

Subject: Redemption of the Ballot.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

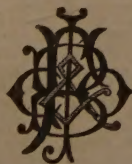
A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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REDEMPTION OF THE BALLOT.

The history which I have read to you furnishes a proper introduction to the theme upon which I shall discourse to-night.

You will take notice that after great corruption had pervaded the government of the nation under Ahab, and things had gone from bad to worse, until they seemed to have reached a point beyond which they could not grow worse, there happened one of those paroxysms, one of those revivals of personal feeling, and of virtue, which bid fair, for the moment, to carry away this whole tangled mesh of abomination. The factors and managers of the royal wickedness were seized, and were destroyed. A powerful impression was made on the imagination, on the religious feeling, and on the patriotism of the people; and for the hour, not the royal head of the nation, but that long, gaunt creature of the wilderness, that Bedouin Arab, as it were, Elijah, he that was always coming as a dream comes, and going as a dream vanishes, towered up the one conspicuous figure. And yet, in the very hour of his preponderant influence, Jezebel sent him word that he too should fall; and, leaving the reformation inchoate, he fled from the northern part of the land, speedily, across the Judean hills, and to the extreme south, and away into the wilderness, and hid himself under a juniper bush, and prayed that God would let him die there. And this was the end of that reformation.

It is a very good text from which to preach and warn people of the danger of sudden and spasmodic reformations, and to endeavor to teach them how great changes from bad to good should rest on sure foundations, carrying intelligence of purpose, organization, persistence, and the will of the community, by virtue, not of a spasm of enthusiasm, but of moral judgment. Then the prophets of reformation will not run from the face of any corrupt royal courtesan whatsoever.

I mean to speak, to-night, on *The Redemption of the Ballot*. The principle of government is of God; but no particular government is divine. Men are made so that they cannot answer the ends

of their creation, nor realize all that they are organized for, except when they are under regulated government.

The natural order of government is, for savage and undeveloped men, absolute monarchy. When they become partially intelligent, and a favored portion of them are able to think for themselves, then an aristocracy. When the whole community are so far leavened as to have an intelligent conception, both of their wants and of the means of their supply, then a republican government, which is an inflection of democracy. In the last mode, or republicanism, the question was first and chiefly, how to give the whole people a chance to make known their will in government. There was needed, first, a method which was adapted to the use of great numbers spread over a wide extent of territory. For a literal democracy, except in a small circuit, is impossible. A literal democracy is where absolutely the whole people vote. This can be done in a township. It cannot well be done in a county. It cannot be done in a State like New York. The whole people in such a State cannot be gathered together at one and the same time, and in the presence of each other, and vote, or declare what their will is, in respect to men, to policies, or to laws. There must be some method, therefore, by which men can express their will while they are distributed through a wide space. And when they exist in such vast numbers that a congregation of them, or a thousand congregations of them, would not be adequate, it is necessary that this expression, by whatever method, of the people's will, should have in it not simply a declaratory force, but a power to execute itself. Merely to say that a people will so and so, is a perilous thing.

Now, the ballot is that invention by which the people determine laws, and policies, and magistracies. In the political machinery which has gradually grown up, it has been arranged that people shall express their wishes by the ballot, and that this expression, going through certain courses, shall organize itself into administration, with all the power of sovereignty, and all the dignity of the state.

The ballot, therefore, is the unit of our government. It is the first point. It is the initial force. And it is at that point that the will of the people begins to take effect. If it be choked, if it be perverted, it is as if a steam-pipe that supplies the engine should be clogged. The machine may be good, but its motive-force is gone.

There is no other part of government which cannot better suffer derangement than the ballot. For that is the point where force concentrates; where it takes on the executive form; where scattered thoughts, purposes, decisions, begin to globe themselves into decrees

that carry with them success. This is the very heart of the system under which we live. It is the means of collecting and registering and enforcing the will of the whole people.

The Judiciary may be corrupted, and yet other parts of the government go on well. The Legislature may for a time be corrupted, and yet other portions of the Government go on well. But if you strike the ballot with disease, it is heart-disease. There is no other place so vital, no other place so full of life; and there is no other place so full of death if it be tampered with—if it be poisoned.

What are the dangers, then, of corruption in this very germ of Government?

1. There is the danger of weak or ignorant voting. This is not always a danger so great as it is sometimes. Its extent depends upon circumstances. In great emergencies, in revolutions, in wars, in proposed changes of constitution, ignorant voting may be fatal voting; but for all transient and ordinary purposes ignorant voting, though it is a mischief, and a great mischief, is not an immedicable one; nor is it so intolerable as many others. Men talk a great deal about the votes of the great mass of ignorant men. I tell you, our dangers do not come from that side. It is not the ignorant men that we are endangered by, but the lazy and the corrupt men—the men who neglect to use, or else abuse, the ballot. It is the top of society that threatens to kill us, and not the bottom. And yet there is danger from the great ignorant mass. It is, however, over-valued in our affairs.

2. Wicked voting, or voting where bad men wickedly combine to secure laws and a magistracy favorable to their corrupt designs, is a danger. Every man has a right by the combination of votes to seek the things which he wants; and every class will seek that which is natural to the plane to which they belong. If they live for the animal life, they will seek, by votes, and through the Government, to secure that which shall gratify the animal life. If they live for the passional life, they will seek, by votes, and through the Government, to secure that which shall gratify the passional life. And so far as political right is concerned, they have as much right to seek those things as you have to seek higher and better things. Nevertheless, where men are living for the flesh; where men desire to bring all the forces of society to bear to secure for themselves the means of corrupt living, it is a great danger to the ballot; it is a great corruption of society; it is a terror; and it ought to be more feared than it is.

3. Passionate and fiery voting is a great peril. To meet this

peril is the object of what are called *republican*, in distinction from direct democratic governments. Men who are ordinarily good, may, under the influence of excitements and passions, vote in such a way as to destroy in an hour that which ages have been occupied in creating. A system of double-voting is, therefore, introduced. It is a mechanical contrivance to make men vote slowly ; as, for instance, where men vote for a representative, and then the representative votes for them, in the enactment of laws, and the administration of policies. This system of double-voting is simply designed to compel men to take time, and vote with their better self, and not with their lower and passionate and fiery self.

4. We are in danger of insubordinate voting, or voting where the result will be accepted if it is liked, and overthrown and rejected if it is disliked. The true doctrine of our government is that in the conduct of affairs, not in moral questions, but in questions of policy, the majority must rule, and the minority must implicitly submit. No man has a right to go to the polls who does not go with the determination to have his own way if he can, and to let other people have theirs if he cannot, and to accept the situation when it has been fairly decided by the ballot.

The only way to change a wrong course or cause, is, to work change in the convictions of the citizen. Change the vote ; but do not undertake to resist the result of the vote. Change the result, by changing the vote again. Otherwise voting is a mockery. The republics of South America are in one perpetual fume of revolution simply because, though they vote, voting settles nothing ; and we have been stable as a government, and have continued till this day, with permanence and growing civilization, because there has been nothing more sacred than the result of fair balloting.

5. We are in danger by venal voting. There would seem, at the first thought, to be little that is very threatening in the selling of the vote ; but experience shows, and philosophic analysis proves, that there is nothing more corrupting and dangerous to the community than that in public affairs, or in his place as a citizen, a man should sell his vote, either for interest or money.

There are very few of you, I suppose, who would take money for your vote at the polls ; but men who were as good by nature as you are, have been sent to the Legislature by hundreds and by hundreds, who have not hesitated to sell their votes there. We call that man a scoundrel who for five dollars will vote this way, or by ten dollars will be turned that way. There is nothing in nomenclature, it would seem, too severe, with which to denounce such a man. And yet, the only difference between him and the man in Albany who

sells his vote, is the difference of the prices which they command in the market. The man who will sell his vote for twenty thousand dollars is meaner than the man who will sell his vote for five dollars; because in the former case there is more deliberation, and less necessity—less pressure of the lower wants.

Voting has become deplorably corrupted in the matter of venality. To raise money to buy votes has become as common as to raise money to publish notices and send out papers and tracts. Money must always be used in the conduct of a great political campaign, because a contest must be carried on by instruments, and these instruments must be supported; but the line is to be drawn where these instruments cease to be legitimate means of giving information to the people—where they become a direct application of money to men's interests. Where the money is purchase-money for votes, it becomes one of the most corrupting of all the influences which can be brought to bear upon the ballot.

Thousands and hundreds of thousands of men consider their voting to be simply a prerogative, which they may sell for what it will bring them from election to election; and they are bought and sold, bought and sold, bought and sold, till they are thoroughly struck through with venality.

And this does not stop with the individual factors. It has gone on from step to step, until we have arrived at a time when, if we do not change, our institutions will drop down, and go to dust from sheer corruption, or inability of these institutions to maintain themselves.

6. The ballot is in danger from corruption in the form of tampering. I allude to that whole interference by fraud between the vote and the declaration of it, with which you are far more familiar than I am, but which, I believe, has been sufficiently exposed, to render every intelligent and paper-reading citizen aware of it. The keeping, by threats and violence, of men away from the polls; the stuffing of ballot-boxes; the changing of votes when they have been deposited; and, above all, the infernal art of counting—these are substantially usurpations which amount to treason. The man who takes the crown and the scepter, and the function of the sovereign, in England, does not commit treason one whit more than the man who by fraud and violence lays his hands upon the ballot-box, and substitutes his will fraudulently for the decree and purpose of the people. What counterfeiting is in commerce, what forgery is in public affairs, what treason is in government, *that, exactly*, and in a more infamous form, is every method by which violence is done to the ballot-box.

This, which I have described, is notorious. It has taken place, and is taking place, in ward after ward, precinct after precinct, year after year, and period after period. And the bribery and corruption are not confined to one side. Fire is being fought by fire. Venality is being fought by venality. Cheating is fought by counter-cheating. Inspectors are bought, and then bought over again. Judges are bribed to dishonesty, and then bribed back to honesty.

All these forms of violence to the ballot are becoming familiar in our great cities. And though I do not think they have been alike practiced by both parties, I do believe that they have been practiced to a certain extent by all parties that have dominated. And so long as that is the case, all thought of reformation in other departments is fatuitous.

7. But the greatest of all the dangers to the ballot is indifference and neglect on the part of the educated community. To the ballot all forms of passion are dangerous, all ignorance is dangerous, all haste is dangerous, all venality is dangerous, all violence is dangerous; but, after all, nothing is half so dangerous to the ballot, in my judgment, as indifference. It is the guiltiest, the wickedest, the most corrupting, of all the evils with which the ballot has to contend.

This danger will be better understood if we inquire into the subject further, and take a larger view of it. I have said that the ballot is the very key to government. It is the key, certainly, to the possession of government. Since the world began, I suppose, men have sought, and till the world shall end, I suppose, men will seek, to get possession of the Government for one purpose and another of their own interest. In every generation the struggle which goes on in society is a struggle to decide who shall possess the Government; who shall have its immunities; who shall enjoy its honors; who shall gratify his ambition by means of it. And in America the Government affords such facilities for self-aggrandizement of a private or corporate nature, that it becomes an object of desire in the eyes of men. And the desire increases as the power wielded increases. This side of automatic Russia, there is no political power comparable to that which is wielded in our Government, which has the control and management of such laws and policies, touching commerce on every side. He that can manage the Government may be said to have the power, well-nigh, to command nature itself. There has always been a struggle between the upper and the lower nature in men for the possession of this Government, and it will always continue. Men of basilar instincts will seek to control the Government, while men of moral instincts will seek to wrest it from

them. And this conflict will go on. It never will be settled. Bad men—men that are consciously or unconsciously bad—in the community, will always be seeking to hold and run the engine; and the good men, upright citizens, will always be stirred up, more or less reluctantly, to wrest the power of the Government from the hands of those who run it for carnal purposes.

Now, consider how powerful parties are in such a nation as this, where they govern half a continent, or a whole continent, and embrace half the population; where they have conglomerated the interests of all classes of men. He knows very little of what parties are who does not know that they are webbed full of the interests of men. He knows very little of what parties are who supposes that they are mere representatives of political opinions. They involve questions of finance; questions of personal freedom; questions relating to the promotion of the interests of the community in a variety of ways; questions that are essentially commercial, and touch men in their very pockets and business. He who has possession of the Government finds in his hands a powerful instrument for the furthering of his own interest on every side; while if it is in the hands of an antagonist, he finds his interest restrained on every side. Great parties represent not merely divisions of opinion, but all industrial interests; commercial interests; the vast property-interests of the country.

Add, now, to these, the great moneyed corporations, like the New York Central Railroad, the Erie Railroad, or the Pennsylvania Central Railroad, which at any moment can take millions of dollars and throw them into the scale, to warp legislation, to bribe the popular vote, and to touch the ballot in its most vital part. And consider how parties themselves stand open to these gigantic influences. As if it were not enough that there should be bad organizations on so broad a scale, see how parties themselves are becoming the ark into which every living creature is creeping.

And, when we consider what the future is to be; that this continent is not half developed; that its policy in a thousand directions is opening up schemes which are commensurate with the globe itself, and which include questions of humanity, and education, and even religion, touching morals in its very vitals; when we consider what pecuniary and partisan interests are brought to bear to control the ballot, have we nothing to fear? Is there no danger in these directions?

I need not say what is understood by all—how largely these moneyed corporations have perverted justice. All of us who are of my age have lived through one period, to see the consciences of men

deadened by, and all their baser passions invested in, slavery. The whole nation was narcotized, and was led through a guilty dance of many years' duration. And when at last slavery was destroyed, men felt, "Now, the nation, like an overloaded ship, that has thrown its burden into the sea, will rise buoyant." But, ah! we did not throw human nature overboard; nor did we throw the passions overboard. This great evil was one place where they resorted; but now that we have routed them from that, they have taken refuge in others. And we have as much to fear now from great corporated moneyed institutions which spread themselves from ocean to ocean, and which are every year coming more and more into the command of treasure literally uncountable, as we had to fear from slavery. The terrific, gigantic, pressure which is brought to bear upon popular affairs from these corporations, ought to give every thoughtful man pause. I tell you, we are, to-day, more in danger from organized money, than ever we were in our lives from that which we regarded as the greatest of evils. And the battle of the future is going to be a battle of gold and silver.

What can stand such a siege; such a bombardment; such sapping and mining; such assault without, and such treachery within? Can the ballot survive when there are so many interests which depend upon perverting it? When there is such force of commercial selfishness brought to bear against it, is there any chance that it can survive and have a power that shall control these other powers? It is time for us to think about these things.

Here, then, is the reason why I declare that of all the dangers which threaten the ballot there is none which is comparable to indifference; for this indifference is chiefly practiced by the rich, the refined, and the religious classes. To the poor it is a power—especially to those who have from foreign lands resorted hither. Never before having been allowed to have a voice in popular affairs, they feel that the ballot is an honor to them. But those who are born and bred here, and who are prosperous and cultivated, and who are living at ease, or are engaged in great industries—these are the men who do not esteem the ballot. These are the men who neglect the ballot. These are the men who by their indifference make the whole community undervalue the ballot. They are the men whose example is copied by the next rank below them. And their example is copied by the next rank below them. And theirs is copied by the next rank below them. It is the highest class that leavens the second; it is the second that leavens the third; and it is the third that leavens the last—for influences go down in gradation. And if our best citizens have made up their mind, or so con-

dict themselves that people have a right to think that they have made up their mind, that the ballot is an insignificant thing, a matter of pure indifference, then down to the bottom of society men will say, "Oh! it is a matter of indifference; and I can do what I have a mind to with it. I see that the best men do not think that it is of any account; I see that the minister does not, and that his parishioners do not, and that the prosperous merchant does not think that it is of any account; I see that they only vote occasionally by way of change, and that habitually they do not vote. From what I hear them say of the ballot I judge that they regard voting as child's play. And as it is of so little account to them, I will take hold of it and see if I cannot make something out of it. I have a right to." It is the indifference, the false witness of those classes in the community who are well-to-do that brings the ballot into such great peril all through the whole community. If they had honored it; if they had revered it; if by their practice they had made men feel that they regarded it as the vital germ of society; if their consciences had fluttered around about it; if their sensibilities had given color to it; if they had instructed their children, and been themselves instructed in the house of God in regard to it; if they had in every way borne witness to their intense appreciation of the value of that which is the very beginning atom of our American society, then there would not have been such a mournful perversion of the ballot all the way through society. It is their indifference that throws the Government into the hands of crafty managing men.

The excuses made for this gross and treasonable neglect are not worthy of the men who make them. They are not willing to expose themselves to conflicts with the great unwashed throng. They are unwilling—these self-indulgent men; these men who have been corrupted by their prosperity—to go out and take the rough-and-tough of political duty, and mix with the disagreeable people whom they would be obliged to mix with. They would like to be wax candles burning in golden candle-sticks. They are willing to dig for money; they are willing to work, stripped from shoulder to shoulder, if, when they put their hand in the wallow they may bring out gold; but they are not willing, for the sake of good morals, and good laws, and good policies, and good magistrates, to quit their slippers, and their comfortable parlors, where they spend their cozy evenings, after the labor of the day is done. Oh, it is so much pleasanter to go and hear Nilsson sing than to attend primaries and contend against the lower elements in the community!

Was there ever a more flagitious excuse, or one so unworthy of manhood and religion?

But it is said, "Things are managed so that a good man only registers the decrees of bad men. They get together, and, by their craft and cunning, settle what is to be, and who is to be; and you find yourself, when you go out, like a green fool going out to be plucked, voting what your masters have fixed for you." Well, how came you so green? How did it come to pass that crafty men got ahead of you? No patriotic man has a right to let a crafty man be smarter than he is. No man has a right to let anybody be more nimble in plotting against the commonwealth than he is in working for it. It is as possible for good men as for bad men to combine. If you made it your interest to serve the public as much as these scheming men, these crafty, web-spinning politicians make it their interest to serve themselves, in the management of political affairs, do you not suppose you could outmeasure all their trickery and cunning by your solid honesty and integrity? It is a shame that some men will do from the worst motives what the highest motives do not inspire other men to do. It is a shame that a man who loves the commonwealth will not do as much to serve it as a man will who does not care for it, and only wants to fleece it. It is a shame that one man should find himself willing to do from selfishness, and under the influence of the nastiest passions of the human heart, what another man finds himself unwilling to do under the influence of honesty, and industry, and foresight, and care, and devotion, and patriotism, and virtue, and religion itself. Is not this a terrible account? And yet, is it not true?

When a good man says, "Politics are in such a state that it will do no good for me to meddle with them," he reads his own condemnation. If you say, "Things are badly arranged," then re-arrange them. I hold that a council of good and virtuous men opposed to the evil men who conduct political affairs, would carry everything before them in any community.

But men say, "We have so much business that we are unable to give the time which would be necessary to enable us to compete with bad men who give their whole time to politics. They of course get the advantage of us." You are like men on a prosperous voyage, with all their property on the ship, who, when the ship springs a leak, say, "We are so busy making the voyage, that we have no time to stop the leak." You will have time to founder if you do not stop it! You are like a man whose house is full of pleasant things, and who is in the midst of agreeable company, and has

not time to extinguish the fire which has broken out. The fire will put you out if you do not put it out! You are like a general who is so busy with the maps of his campaign, that, when the enemy comes down on his flank, and is about to rout him, he has not time to rise up and go out to fight!

All the mischiefs that make taxation burdensome; that lay burdens on men's shoulders heavier than they can bear; that run up the Poor-house tax, the Jail tax, the Hospital tax, and the Ring taxes—these all exist because you are so busy that you cannot attend to your political duties. You cannot look after the interests of the community; so the devil's tax-gatherers go out and levy taxes; and you groan and groan, and cheat and cheat, and say, "Oh, well, there is no harm in dodging the taxes! The system of imposing taxes is a cheat anyhow." You fight fire with fire; and so you go into partnership with the devil in order to get the dividends!

I affirm again, that this willful, shameful, outrageous indifference, the want of patriotism and conscience, the want of industry and concert, the want of combination, the want of patient perseverance and enterprise, among good men, has corrupted the common people in the matter of voting; and brought more peril on the ballot than all other causes put together. And you will never turn back the stream of corruption until you begin reformation there.

Then it is, when alarming mischiefs, bred and brooded by this great mass of lazy, prosperous men, take on forms of threat and disaster, that we hear the cry coming from them, "Let us have a Vigilance Committee; and let us catch some of these rogues and hang them to a lamp post!" Yes, you betray the community first by indolence and neglect, and then you attempt to carry it into revolution in order to cure some of the mischiefs which you have caused. You blow it up at both ends—at the top, by your bad example, and at the bottom, by your worse advice.

Ah! the most unwholesome thing in this world, in the long run, is promiscuous hanging to lamp-posts. Though you may have the advantage at the beginning, you will not at the end. When good men combine to expel monsters, and it is understood, monsters will combine to expel good men. And when it comes to revolution, bad men will have the advantage. As long as good men go by law and precedent, and hold to the sacredness of the laws of society, they have the staff of power; but the moment they abandon these things they throw the staff of power into the hands of bad men. And when I see respectable newspapers and respectable men, in an outburst of red indignation, crying, "Let us have a Vigilance Committee, and snap judgment on these men, and hang half of them!" I

regard it with a horror which I have no words to describe. It is an outrage and an abomination. The tongue of a man who utters such words as those ought to wither in his mouth.

In view of these statements in regard to the danger of the ballot, I remark, first, that there is very little gain from any uprising of the people which merely shifts the scenes, and leaves the same immorality at work. It was well for Elijah to kill four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal; but Baal was not killed. And the king and queen, who were Baal's prime ministers, still remained. The same morbid influences existed as before. And in a few days the prophet ran. Then Baal came back. And if now the same immorality exists in men's minds and thoughts and feelings and practices in regard to the ballot as hitherto, in the language of Watts, *you will only change the place, and keep the pain*. You will remove the present actors; but new letters will spell other names; and substantially the same thing will go on. That is not reformation. There is no reformation in the community unless the whole community are lifted up to a higher level. When the community are so lifted up, and they begin a new procedure, then only will there be reformation.

Not that these things ought not to be done. They ought to be done. These bad men ought to be overtaken and convicted and severely punished. They ought to be utterly ousted. But even if they are, that will not be reformation. It will only be *preparation* for reformation. The reformation is to begin in you and in me. There is to be a reformation in the church, in schools, in the household, and in commercial circles. We must rise to the argument of American liberty, and enter into a conviction of the responsibilities and dignities and grandeur of the American ballot, as we have never yet done. We must redeem the ballot by throwing about it a new life and sanctity. If we cannot do that, the less we talk about reformation the better.

What do you think of a reformation where one of the professed reformers rides through the streets throwing out five-dollar bills by handfuls, to evoke the cheers and good fellowship of the Irish population? Do you suppose if the men on the other side who bribed the ballot-box yesterday, were every one of them hung, and another set of men should rise up on your side to bribe the ballot-box tomorrow, that you have reformed anything? You have simply wreaked vengeance on them, and taken the responsibility off their hands and upon yourselves, and gone on in the work of corruption.

I do not believe that both parties are equally corrupt (I would not undertake to settle that question); but I do believe that to a

great extent prominent men of both parties have permitted themselves to make the vote venal. One set of men say, "Boys, every vote shall be worth five dollars in money to you." So the "boys" know beforehand what they are working for; and they go to work and get votes—manufacturing them. And everybody knows that if the population should increase as the votes do, we should be an immensely populous nation in a very short time!

Another style of doing it is this: after the election is carried, money is gathered, and the principal runners go about saying, "Here, boys, is some money that we have left over. You may as well have it. Divide it among yourselves." It is a comfortable pile, and they remember it. And the next time, after the thing is all done, the victors say, "Well, boys, here are a few thousands of dollars left which you can have." This is done on our side as well as on the other. It is not called bribing, because the money is not paid out or promised, *per capita*, beforehand. One side bribe one way, and the other side the other way; but it is bribery, whether it is before or after, open or secret, direct or indirect. It is the devil's work, whichever side does it, and it corrupts the policy and procedure of men.

Money must not be allowed to be a legitimate factor in politics. And if you say, "The time has not come for this reform;" if you say, "We cannot rise to so high a plane at once," then I say, You are no reformer. I declare to you, it is better that any party should go into a minority, be exiled, and begin to rise from the bottom by the power of a moral principle which shall gather about it a faith and a fervor which are irresistible, than that it should undertake to carry on a momentary and present scheme by resorting to the old causes. If you are going to use money to corrupt votes and voters, by influences addressed to the lower nature of man, you do not belong to the party of reform; you belong to the old party.

Offices must cease to be put into the political market, and scrambled for. The civil service of this nation is an organized and standing threat at the liberties of the nation. If the enginery of government is to be parceled out as a reward for political services; if in great cities government patronage is to be distributed for party purposes; if men in subordinate offices are continually to be put in and put out, and put in and put out, in accordance with the interests of one side or the other; if the vast and every year increasing number of places for distribution are to be put up for sale on no other principle than this, I do not believe that this Government can long maintain its integrity. Such a procedure is manufacturing a poison which will destroy its vitality; and I think that one of the things

which this administration should inaugurate and carry forward to a victorious result, is the reform of the civil service. For now, every Custom-house in the land is a bribery shop; and every office in the land is a bribe, for perverting and corrupting the man who holds it, and the man who gives it—an evil to the whole community, deadening the national conscience.

No man must be held to be respectable who connives with any party, or who abets any set of men in iniquity for advantage to his own interest.

Do you suppose that all the gigantic villainy which has been going on in New York has been without the privity of capitalists there? A man told me himself that one came to him, saying, "If you will give me half that you can save, I will see that you are not taxed on your property as you have been assessed." Said the man, to whom this offer was made, "That will not do: I should like to pay less if I could; but I do not see how I can get rid of paying as I have been assessed." Said the other, "If you will give me half that you can save, I will see that you are assessed less." "I have no objection to being assessed less," says the man. And he was assessed less. And he told me he saved ten thousand dollars by that operation. In other words, his property was assessed twenty thousand dollars less than it had been. And do you suppose that men who had ten million dollars' worth of property, had no understanding as to how the taxes were to be levied? Do you suppose there has been no silence and no connivance in this matter?

I think that men who have been factors in wickedness—very wicked men—ought to be punished; but it does not seem to me that they ought to be made scape-goats. They cannot bear the sins of all those who lie concealed back of them. And it ought to be understood that men who *connive* at public dishonesty blast their own reputation.

We must learn that nothing will preserve society but the living force of earnest men. It is a great mistake on the part of men who have learned the benefit of institutions, of laws, of what may be called the machinery of civil government, that they attempt to put off upon laws and institutions the work which can only be done by a permanent living force; that they attempt to make a fight against the passions of men without any personal inconvenience to themselves. Men get tired of individual effort in the work of reformation, and would be glad if laws could be enacted which would take the whole responsibility from their shoulders. But such a thing cannot be. I believe that laws regulating the drinking customs of society are expedient and necessary as auxiliaries; but laws which shall be expected to be

institutional forces, and do the work, and save us the trouble of keeping up a living force, are snares and delusions. Yet men are leaning that way. They want the church to take care of the community's morals; they want the courts to take care of commercial affairs; they want the magistrates to do the citizens' duties. We are putting on institutions and laws and men in official stations that which can only be done well by the public sentiment of the whole people.

Now, in regard to this matter of reformation, it is simply preposterous to expect that any Citizens' Committee, or any organized body, alone, will take it into their hands and carry it forward. There must be a living thought, and a persistent effort, on the part of the great body of citizens, or else, no matter how well things may begin, they will not end well.

That is one reason why it is absolutely necessary that religion should teach more on this subject. If there was ever a time when it was necessary for the pulpit to bring to men a consciousness of their every-day duties to the State, and to the age in which they live, this is that time. A man's conscience never acts except in the sphere in which it was educated to act. It only measures what it is used to measuring. If you do not educate a man's conscience to measure politics, it never will measure politics. If you educate it simply to measure affairs in the household, it will measure those affairs, and no others. If you only educate it to measure business or professional matters, it will measure these, but will be incompetent to measure anything outside of these. And if the church is going to educate the conscience of the community so that it shall be adequate to the emergency of the time, it must teach men that to be good citizens they must give as much time as is necessary to maintain a good public sentiment, and a good public practice, and the institutions of justice, though it take half their time.

One thing more. While we are bound to bring up the judgment, and bring up the tone of conscience, among men, let us not give way for one moment to weakness or to cowardice. There are a great many who throw up their hands and say, "Well, the experiment of self-government is a failure, at any rate in cities. We have tried it, and it is an utter failure." I deny it! This thing has not been fought out. It has not failed; it *must* not fail; and by the help of God it *shall* not fail. Self-government is best in the country and in the city. Self-government is feasible in the country and in the city. Self-government can be maintained in Brooklyn and in New York. We have not put forth our energy yet. We have not really roused ourselves up to the occasion yet. But we shall do it. And woe to that vaticinator who stands in the spirit at

once of laziness and cowardice, saying, "No use, no use; all up, all up!" I smite him on his mildewed lips and say, *Peace, croaking raven!* It is not an experiment tried. There is power in the church. There is power in the hearts of good men; in the hearts of the educated; in the hearts of the plain middle class; in the hearts of the toiling, laboring men. They want more light; they want more time; they want more brotherhood and fellowship. If you that are comfortable do not choose to go among your fellow men, and make yourself as one of them; if you are not willing to carry light, and knowledge, and persuasion, and intelligence, down to them, then you must expect to meet the consequences. But, if the best men in the community will rouse themselves up, and feel that all men are their brethren, and bring right influences to bear upon them, and set wholesome examples before them, sparing no time and no zeal, a reformation will be established, and will be maintained from generation to generation. And if so gigantic a mischief as that of the corruption of the ballot shall be overcome in this nation, it will be one more evidence of the potency of popular self-government.

When the late civil war broke out in this country, all Europe said, "Now you will see that great clumsy Government go to pieces. It cannot bear the strain of war." There never was a Government that bore it so well. "Oh," said the *London Times*, "they have only danced; they have not paid the piper yet!" The time came to arrange for paying the debt; and never did a people vote so largely to pay out their own money. "But they have not paid it yet." They have been paying it for about seven years; in the midst of temptations to repudiation such as the devil never plied men with before. There was a cry from the grave of every man who had fallen in the struggle, saying, "Stand to your faith and honesty;" and they did stand. And the nation has overwhelmed with disaster every man who counseled repudiation.

And now, having shown that in circumstances of great trial there was enough of intelligence and true morality among us to compass such achievements as maintaining ourselves through war, and the payment of the debts of war, let us show that when intestine corruption threatens to destroy us, there is recuperative power among the citizens of such a Republic as this to medicate and cure this evil more speedily, and more thoroughly than any other disease was ever cured. Then we shall have worked out a more glorious consummation than that which was conceived by our fathers. Our institutions will shine out with new light; men who sit in darkness in the far regions of the earth will look to us with renewed

confidence; the banner of liberty will unroll its folds; and God will bless us.

Stand to the work of maintaining your integrity and honor; give time to it; uphold the men who are laboring for the common weal, and God will give you victory. And in heaven, if not on earth, you will rejoice to see something of that which now in tears you are accomplishing.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Our Father, we thank thee for the knowledge which thou hast imparted of thyself. Though it does not comprehend all of thy being; though thou art greater than our uttermost thoughts can compass, so large that we cannot conceive of thee; yet thou hast brought thyself near to us through Jesus Christ; and we discern that which was vague and is vague to those who have not known him, made known to our understanding, rendered intelligible to our want, and brought near to our affection. We thank thee for all that thou hast inspired in us of knowledge by the brooding of the Spirit. We thank thee for the hope, for the yearning, for the aspiration, for the faith, vouchsafed to us; and we still stretch out our hands to thee, knowing that thou canst not send blessings upon our hearts as thou dost send rain upon the flowers; but we know that in becoming like thee thou wilt transform us, and quicken in us whatever is divine, and help us to rise above that which is low, and of the earth earthy, and bring forth in ourselves that which is of the Spirit, that we may comprehend thee more and more. And growing toward that which we learn and know, may we be more and more qualified to increase our knowledge. Thus may we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Grant, we beseech of thee, thy blessing to rest upon thy Church universal; upon all the branches of it; upon all those who are walking in communion with thee, whatever may be their fellowship. May the power of the Spirit among thy people grow more and more abundant. We pray for the diffusion of those influences which have thus far so enriched the world; which have restrained iniquity; which have given power to virtue; which have advanced thy cause among the nations of the earth until this day.

Lord, we pray that thy power may be augmented among men. Still we cry, Thy will be done upon earth as it is done in heaven. And we pray that thou wilt make thy churches wise to discern the signs of the times, and thy ministering servants fearless to do the things which are needed. And we pray that thou wilt revive thy work. Wilt thou grant that by the power of an enlightened conscience, and by a judgment formed through conscience, thy people may be able to take hold of the great work of the day in which they live. Cleanse the temple. Build foundations where they should be built. Rear up the structures of society upon pure foundations. May thy glory shine in this whole land. And when men shall inquire after our education, our thrift, and our great strength, and happiness, and prosperity, may they discern that it is the Spirit of God that dwells among us, and has been the reason and cause of all these things. And so may the name of God be glorified among us.

And we pray for the diffusion of principles of justice, and of truth, and of love, and of sympathy among men, which have been to us so great a blessing, and which are yet to bear their fruits abroad in all the earth.

“ Oh! hasten the day when man shall not be the worst enemy of man; when a feeling of true brotherhood shall spring up among all nations; when we shall know how to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Cleanse our hearts, we pray thee. Cleanse our households. Cleanse the cities in which we dwell. Cleanse the whole land, and the whole world. and make haste, and bring to pass the promised glory of the latter day, when all the earth shall see thy salvation. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit shall be praises evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our heavenly Father, we beseech of thee that thy blessing may rest upon the word which has been spoken. May we be clothed with the true spirit of Christian men, acting for the welfare of the commonwealth. May we love thee, and each other, and the State, and all its institutions. May we abhor that which is evil, and spare, with pity and compassion, all those who are tempted. While we punish, may we still pity. While we condemn every evil, and punish the evil-doer, may we remember that the sign of Christ is on him. And may we not turn ourselves into beasts, as though we were pursuing beasts. May we have the Spirit of our Master, which works by love and sympathy. And while pursuing sin and transgression, and sweeping them from the earth, may we know how to take care of the transgressor and the sinner, and endeavor to cure them from the evil of their way.

Deliver us from all temptation. Make us mightier for good than the influences around about us are for evil. Give us a faith which shall sustain us in all the varied trials of this life. And when at last thou shalt have done with us on earth, take us to thine heavenly kingdom, through riches of grace in our Lord. *Amen.*



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